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Afghanistan Situation Report

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20 May 1986

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NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

20 May 1986

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AFGHANISTAN SITUATION REPORT



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CONTENTS

LARGE-SCALE OPERATION CONTINUES IN PAKTIA PROVINCE



2

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Soviet and Afghan forces continued their large-scale offensive against insurgents in northern Paktia Province for the second week, while



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preparations are under way for a combined Soviet-Afghan attack in nearby Nazian Valley.



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REFUGEE RELIEF TRANSPORTATION CRITICIZED



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Afghan refugee relief transportation system in Pakistan is over-centralized and poorly managed. Still, essential supplies are reaching the refugees.



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MONEY CHANGERS THRIVE IN KABUL



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Money changers in Kabul continue to operate with few restrictions under the Communist regime probably because they provide the regime with necessary foreign exchange.



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VISITS BADAKSHAN



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Badakshan Province in mid-1985,

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20 May 1986
NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

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the Jamiat-i-Islami guerrilla groups there were functioning successfully, despite shortages of some supplies. 

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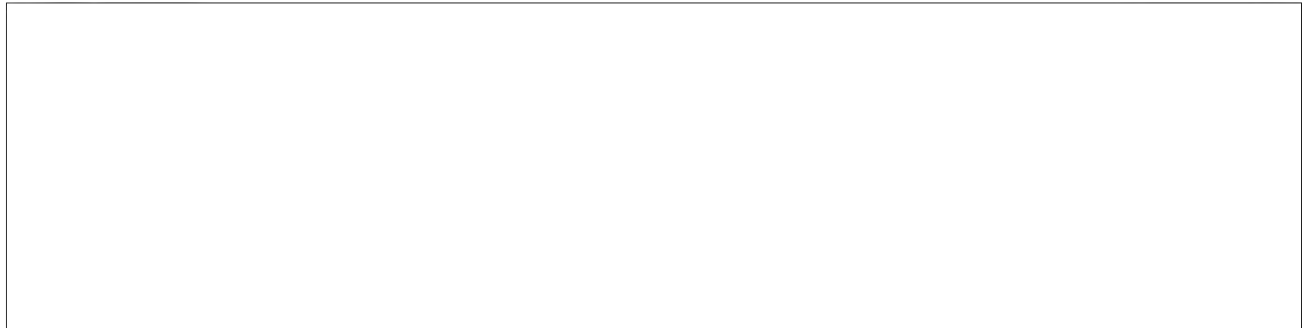
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IN BRIEF

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LARGE-SCALE OPERATION CONTINUES IN PAKTIA PROVINCE

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Soviet and Afghan regime forces are pressing their offensive against guerrillas in Paktia Province for a second week.

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major elements of a Soviet air assault brigade with air and artillery support had deployed northeast of Ali Kheyl from Sawat Lgada. The task force, which includes about half of an artillery regiment, is conducting sweeps near the Pakistani border to clear out insurgents that have harassed local Afghan garrisons. Press reports say the recent fighting has produced heavy casualties on both sides, including two commanders of Abdul Rasul Sayyaf's Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan. Although the defending insurgents--primarily from the National Islamic Front--probably will continue to offer stiff resistance, they may abandon their fortified positions in the face of the overwhelming firepower of opposition forces.

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most Soviet units have departed from their garrisons at Jalalabad.

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insurgents ambushed convoys near Metharlam and southwest of Kabul, and the US Embassy in Kabul reports a large fuel convoy was attacked near the Salang Pass on 9 May.

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20 MAY 1986
NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

25X1

Page Denied

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REFUGEE RELIEF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM CRITICIZED [REDACTED]

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An unpublished study by a West German consulting firm on the Afghan refugee relief transportation system in Pakistan charges Islamabad with poor management, according to the US Embassy in Islamabad. Although essential food and relief supplies reach the refugees, the study concludes that the system is overcentralized and relies too heavily on expensive trucking instead of more cost-effective rail transport. In addition, the army's National Logistics Cell (NLC), which has been involved in the transport of refugee relief goods since 1982, is accused of overcharging. [REDACTED]

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COMMENT: The Pakistani Government probably will be reluctant to make major revisions in the current transportation arrangements. Islamabad transports the majority of refugee commodities by truck because it uses railway cars to ship bulk items for the domestic

20 MAY 1986
NESAM 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

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economy. Pakistani reluctance to remedy the shortcomings probably will prompt refugee relief officials to rely more heavily on private trucking.

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MONEY CHANGERS THRIVE IN KABUL

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Money changers continue to operate with relatively few restrictions under the Communist regime in Kabul, according to the president of the Kabul money changers union. The money changers are free to set daily market exchange rates--which they determine by listening to foreign radio broadcasts on international currency rates--and to open foreign currency accounts in foreign banks. In return for this freedom, the money changers supply the regime with foreign exchange at a preferential rate to finance the regime's foreign trade. There are about 110 money changers operating in Kabul; most have partners in Dubai who provide links to Pakistan.

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COMMENT: The regime suffers from a shortage of foreign exchange because of chronic balance of payments deficits. Kabul continues to allow the private sector to function in many areas of the economy, demonstrating its willingness to sacrifice ideology for practical considerations.

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BADAKHSHAN

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2,500 insurgents in the Kowkcheh Valley east of Feyzabad were reasonably well-supplied with small arms and food but suffered shortages of antiaircraft weapons and warm clothing and had inadequate medical care. [redacted] insurgent morale as generally high and noted that the Jamiat forces in the area were commanded by Basir Khan, one of the more effective of the younger Jamiat field commanders. [redacted] the Jamiat insurgents had significant disagreements with local Hizbi-Islami (Gulbuddin) members.

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20 MAY 1986
NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

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[REDACTED]

COMMENT: Badakhshan Province is a relative backwater of the war, because of the area's remoteness. Accordingly, insurgents in this area probably are given a much lower priority for supply shipments from Peshawar. [REDACTED]

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IN BRIEF

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-- A delegation of Afghan resistance leaders visited Colombia in early May as part of a Latin American tour to gain support for their cause. The delegation was received by Colombian President Betancur and other high-ranking officials. The insurgents also plan visits to Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. [REDACTED]

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-- [REDACTED] the Soviet Ministry of Defense recently changed the law governing military

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[REDACTED]

20 MAY 1986
NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

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[redacted]
service in Afghanistan. [redacted] male
conscripts who are only sons would be exempt from
duty there. [redacted] the move reflects the
Soviet leadership's growing sensitivity over
casualties suffered in Afghanistan. [redacted]

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-- An allusion to the war in Afghanistan--including
mention of the use of poison gas--appeared in a
drama recently staged in Moscow, according to the
US Embassy in Moscow. The oblique reference
evidently escaped the censors' notice. [redacted]

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20 MAY 1986
NESA M 86-20074JX
SOVA M 86-20049JX

25X1

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